TRANSLATOR'S DECLARATION

I, Isamu TAKAHASHI, c/o. Takahashi & Company, 7th floor, Shinoda Bldg., 10-7, Higashi Kanda 1-chome, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0031 JAPAN, do hereby declare that I am the translator of the priority document of Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-145128 and swear that the following is a true translation to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated this 26th day of July, 2004

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[Document Title] Specification

[Title of the Invention] System and Method for Selling Products by Using the Internet, and Storage Medium

[What is Claimed is]

[Claim 1] A system for selling a product by using the Internet, comprising:

a user terminal connected to the Internet; and

a supplier terminal which, upon receiving an application for purchasing a product from the user terminal via the Internet, charges a commission fee to a user operating the user terminal, randomly selects a price of the product from a predetermined price range, and presents the selected price to the user together with a predetermined valid term.

[Claim 2] A system for selling a product by using the Internet according to claim 1, wherein the commission fee is determined by multiplying a predetermined rate to a standard price of the product.

[Claim 3] A system for selling a product by using the Internet according to claim 1 or 2, further comprising an audit authority terminal for supervising setting of the price by the supplier terminal.

[Claim 4] A system for selling a product by using the Internet according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein a privilege to purchase the product at the price presented by the supplier terminal can be resold to a third person.

[Claim 5] A method for selling a product by using the Internet, comprising the steps of:

upon receiving an application for purchasing a product from a user terminal via the Internet, charging a commission fee to a user operating the user terminal;

randomly selecting a price of the product from a predetermined price range; and

presenting the selected price to the user together with a predetermined valid term.

[Claim 6] A method for selling a product by using the Internet according to claim 5, wherein the commission fee is determined by multiplying a predetermined rate to a standard price of the product.

[Claim 7] A storage medium which stores a program for selling a product so as to execute processes including:

upon receiving an application for purchasing a product from a user terminal via the Internet, charging a commission fee to a user operating the user terminal;

randomly selecting a price of the product from a predetermined price range; and

presenting the selected price to the user together with a predetermined valid term.

[Claim 8] A storage medium which stores the program for selling a product according to claim 7, wherein the commission fee is determined by multiplying a predetermined rate to a standard price of the product.

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[Field of the Invention]

The present invention relates to a system and a method for selling products by using the Internet. More particularly, the present invention relates to a system and a method for selling products, which are characterized by the style of price presentation.

[0002]

[Prior Art]

Recently, sales systems for selling products via the Internet have become common. However, according to the conventional Internet-based sales methods, only a single selling price is set for a single product. Therefore, in order to purchase a cheaper product, the user has to access a plurality of sites to collect information on the price of the product.

[0003]

Furthermore, according to the conventional sales methods using the Internet, in order to promote the products to the purchasers, the product suppliers are often involved in price competition or a discount battle. Such a problem is likely to occur in the Internet-based sales system because the Internet allows easy comparison between the prices of the products from different suppliers.

[0004]

[Problem to be Solved by the Invention]

Thus, the conventional sales system has a problem of causing overheating price competition between the suppliers.

[0005]

The present invention has an objective of providing a sales system using the Internet, which can avoid an occurrence of overheating price competition between the suppliers selling the same product.

[0006]

[Scheme for Solving the Problems]

In order to accomplish the above-mentioned objective, a system for selling products by using the Internet according to the present invention comprises: a user terminal connected to the Internet; and a supplier terminal which, upon receiving an application for purchasing a product from the user terminal via the Internet, charges a commission fee to the user operating the user terminal, randomly selects a price of the product from a predetermined price range, and presents the selected price on the user terminal together with a predetermined valid term.

[0007]

According to the present invention, selling prices of a single product provided by a single supplier are set within a predetermined price range. As a result, a comparison between the selling prices from different suppliers becomes difficult, thereby preventing overheating price competition between the suppliers.

[0008]

[Embodiment of the Invention]

Hereinafter, one embodiment of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the drawings. Figure 1 is a block diagram showing the structure of a sales system for selling products using the Internet according to the embodiment of the present invention.

[0009]

The Internet-based sales system according to this embodiment uses the existing Internet environment. A user terminal 1, an intermediate dealer terminal 2, a supplier terminal 3 and an audit authority terminal 4 are each connected to the Internet.

[0010]

A sales program for selling products 11 is run on the supplier terminal 3, to determine selling prices and conduct merchandise control. The user terminal 1 and the intermediate dealer terminal 2 can use general WWW browsers 12 and 14 to participate in this sales system. Hereinafter, purchasers of the products such as the users and the intermediate dealers are collectively referred to as the "users". The audit authority terminal 4 performs direct online supervision of transactions between the user, the intermediate dealer and the supplier by adopting a supervisory program 13. Alternatively, indirect supervision is also possible by referring to the log file (past processing record) of the sales program 11.

[0011]

The supplier terminal 3 is connected to a storage medium 20 storing the sales program 11 for executing the method of selling products according to the present embodiment. The storage medium 20 may be a magnetic disk, a semiconductor memory or other storage medium. The sales program 11 is read out from the storage medium 20 by the supplier terminal 3 for controlling the operation of the supplier terminal 3. The supplier terminal 3 executes each processing according to the sales method of the present embodiment under the control of the sales program 11.

[0012]

Hereinafter, an operation by the sales system of the present embodiment will be described with reference to a flowchart shown in Figure 2.

[0013]

For example, when a user desires to purchase a particular product, first (s)he uses the user terminal 1 to connect to the supplier terminal 3 via the Internet (Step 101). The user can find the information about the product upon connection to the supplier terminal 3. At this point, the information that can be confirmed by the user includes a standard price 21 and price history (Step 102).

[0014]

In view of such product information, the user can apply for purchasing the product (Step 103). Upon this application, the supplier charges a commission fee of a few percent of the price of the applied product to the user in advance (Step 104). For example, if the standard price of

the product is 10,000 yen and the commission rate is 1%, the user needs to pay 100 yen to the supplier.

[0015]

Next, the sales program 11 is run on the supplier terminal 3 to randomly select the selling price of the product from a predetermined price range, and present the selected selling price to the user. The possibility of each selling price to be selected is predetermined for each selling price.

[0016]

For example, if the standard price is 10,000 yen, the selling price may be selected from a price range of about 8,500 yen to 11,500 yen and then presented. An exemplary relationship between the selling price and the sales proportion will be shown in Figure 3. In Figure 3, the standard price is 10,000 yen (standard deviation: 500 yen), prices are set at every 100 yen, and sales proportion at each price is set according to a normal distribution.

[0017]

When the user decides to purchase the product at the presented price (Step 106), (s)he purchase the product at the presented price (Step 108). When the user desires to actually purchase the product, the supplier terminal 3 must sell the product at the presented selling price. On the other hand, when the user considers that the presented price is too expensive (Step 106), (s)he can abandon the privilege to purchase the product without purchasing the product (Step 107). However, either the user decided to purchase or not to

purchase the product, the commission fee paid in advance is not paid back. In other words, the user pays the commission fee to buy the privilege to purchase the product at the presented selling price.

[0018]

In the above-described Step 106, when the user agrees with the selling price presented, (s)he can obtain the product upon payment to the supplier. However, the selling price has an expiration date, after which the user loses the privilege to buy the product at the presented selling price. For a general product, about one week would be enough as the valid term.

[0019]

Since the price of the product is not fixed according to the sales method of the present embodiment, fraudulent operation may be conducted. In order to prevent such fraud, a third-party audit authority is necessary for auditing the sales program 11, prices and the like. Accordingly, an audit authority terminal 4 is adopted to supervise the settings of the prices by the supplier terminal 3.

[0020]

According to the sales system using the Internet of the present embodiment, a product at a standard price of 10,000 yen can be sold with a price range of 3,000 yen even when the price is set according to the normal distribution as shown in Figure 3. Therefore, the user has a chance of purchasing a product (s)he wishes for at a low price that would not be offered by a general sales method. The supplier

can expect commission receipts. Even when the sales prices are slightly different between the suppliers, most of the prices should overlap by distributing the prices as represented by the graph shown in Figure 3. Thus, it is difficult for the users to judge the difference of the prices between the suppliers. Judging which supplier sells the product at the most inexpensive price becomes particularly difficult when each supplier has a distinguishing price range, a distinguishing commission rate, a distinguishing sales proportion or the like. As a result, overheating price competition between rival stores can be avoided. Even when the standard price is raised or reduced, such changes are hard for the user to recognize for the foresaid reason.

[0021]

According to the sales system of the present embodiment, the settings of the sales program 11 can be changed to alter the sales feature. For example, the price range may be expanded to realize a game-like sales style like lottery instead of a normal sales style. Alternatively, by extending the valid term for products whose prices unsteadily fluctuate, speculative purchasing can be realized.

[0022]

Although the present embodiment is described as the case of direct purchasing by those who desires to purchase such as users or the intermediate dealers, the present invention is not limited thereto. The users or the like may acquire and then resell the privilege to purchase the product

at the presented price if the privilege to purchase the product is no longer attractive to them.

[0023]

The audit authority required by the system may not only supervise the sales transaction but may be entrusted by the supplier to be in full charge of the sales as a specialized agent employing the above-described sales method.

[0024]

[Effects of the Invention]

Thus, according to the present invention, a single product from a single supplier can be sold at a price within a predetermined range. As a result, it becomes difficult for the users to judge the difference of prices between the suppliers, thereby advantageously preventing price competition between the stores from overheating.

[Brief Description of the Drawings]

Figure 1 is a block diagram showing the structure of a sales system using the Internet according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the sales system using the Internet shown in Figure 1; and

Figure 3 is a graph representing the relationship between the selling prices and the sales proportion.

[Description of Symbols]

1 user terminal

2 intermediate dealer terminal

3 supplier terminal

4 audit authority terminal

11 sales program

12 WWW browser

20 storage medium

101 to 108 step

[Document Title] Abstract

[Abstract]

[Object] To provide a system for selling products by using the Internet, by which occurrence of overheating price competition among suppliers selling the same product can be prevented.

[Scheme] When a user terminal 1 applies via the Internet to purchase a product provided by a supplier terminal 3, a commission fee is charged to the user terminal 1, a price of the product is randomly selected from a predetermined price range, and the selected price is presented to the user together with a predetermined valid term. The user may purchase the product at the presented price, or may not purchase the product if (s)he does not agree with the presented price. By giving a price range to a single product provided by a single supplier, the price difference among suppliers becomes difficult to judge, and thus overheating price competition among the stores can be avoided.

[Selected Drawing] Fig. 1

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FIG. 1

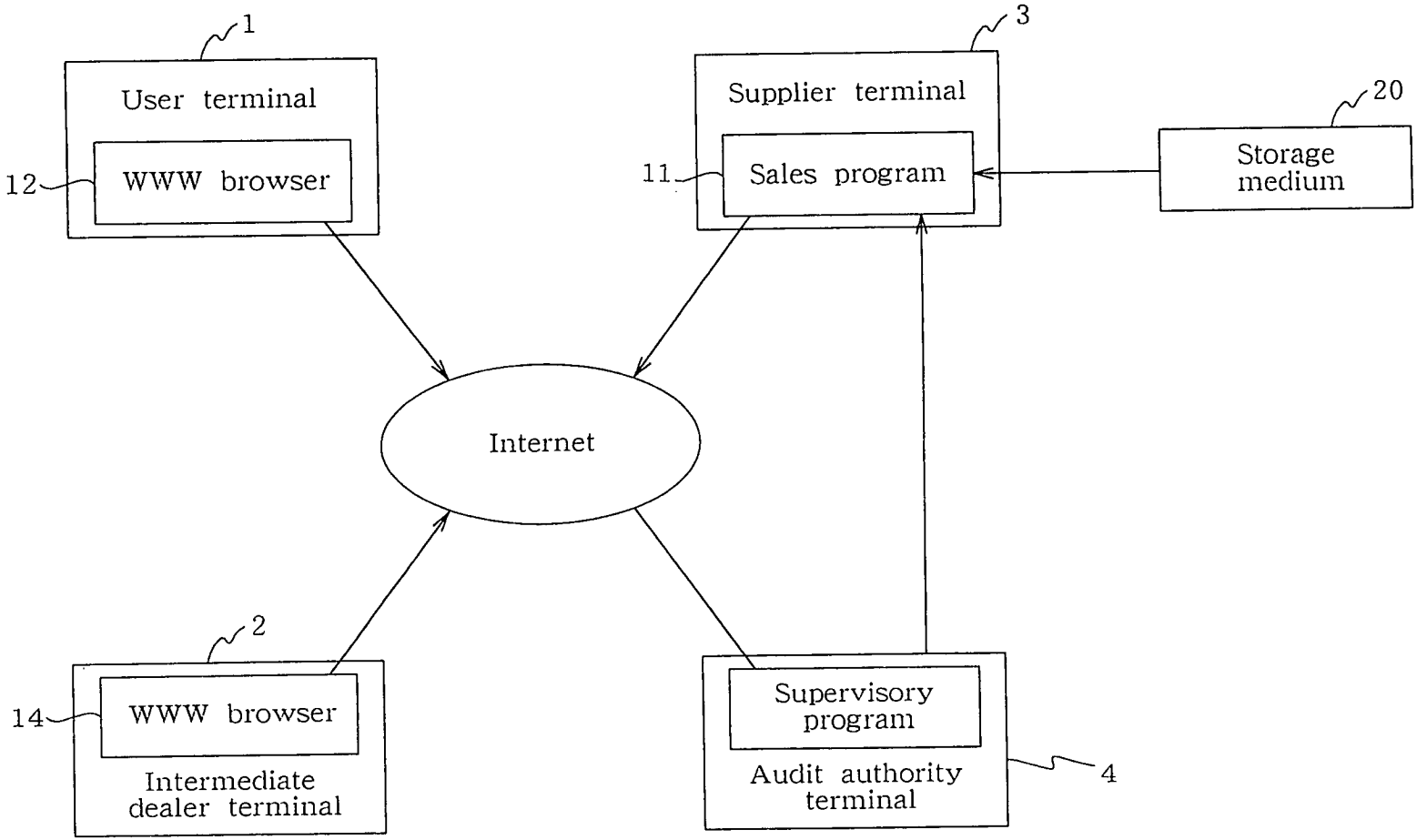

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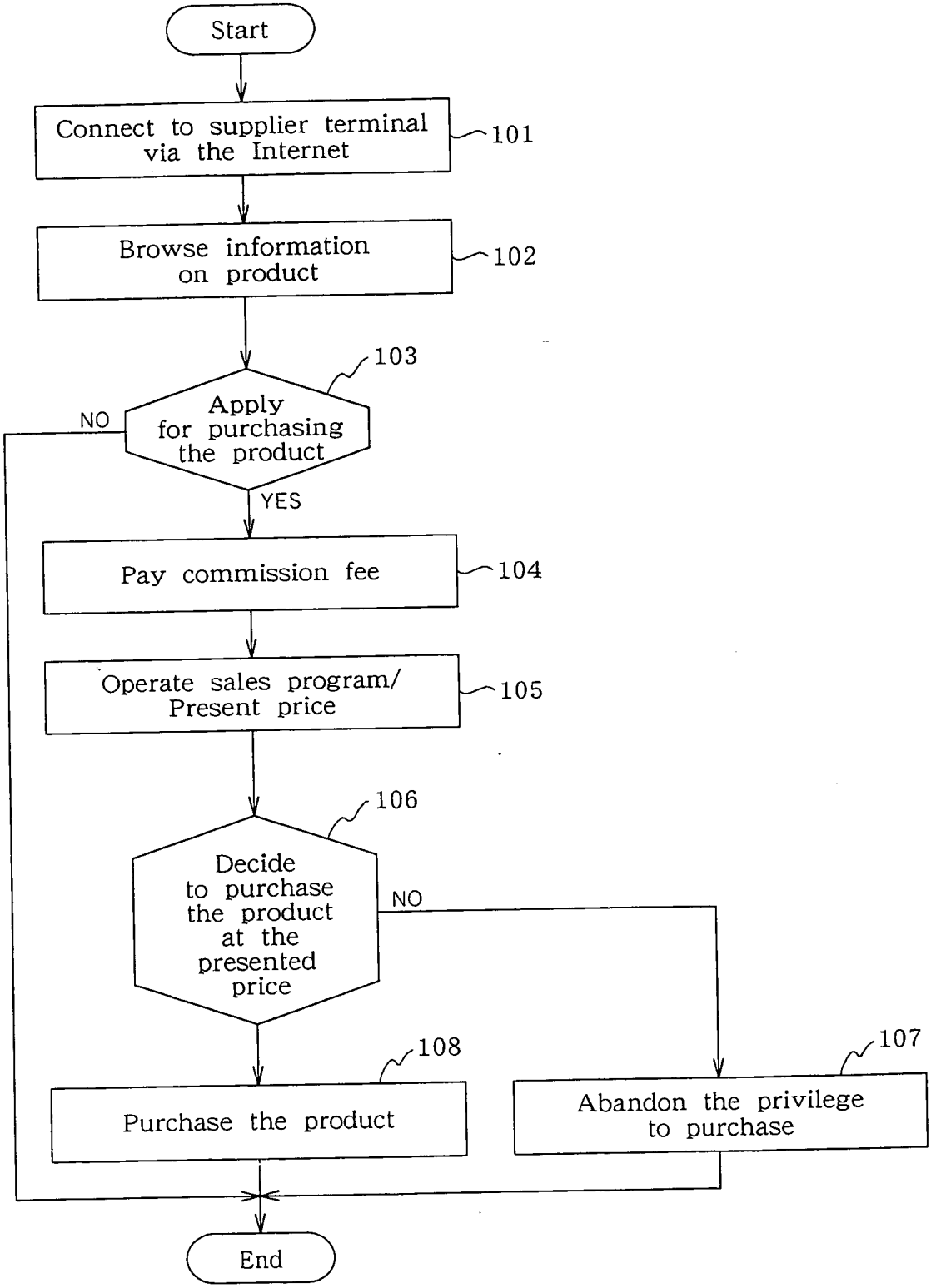
FIG.2



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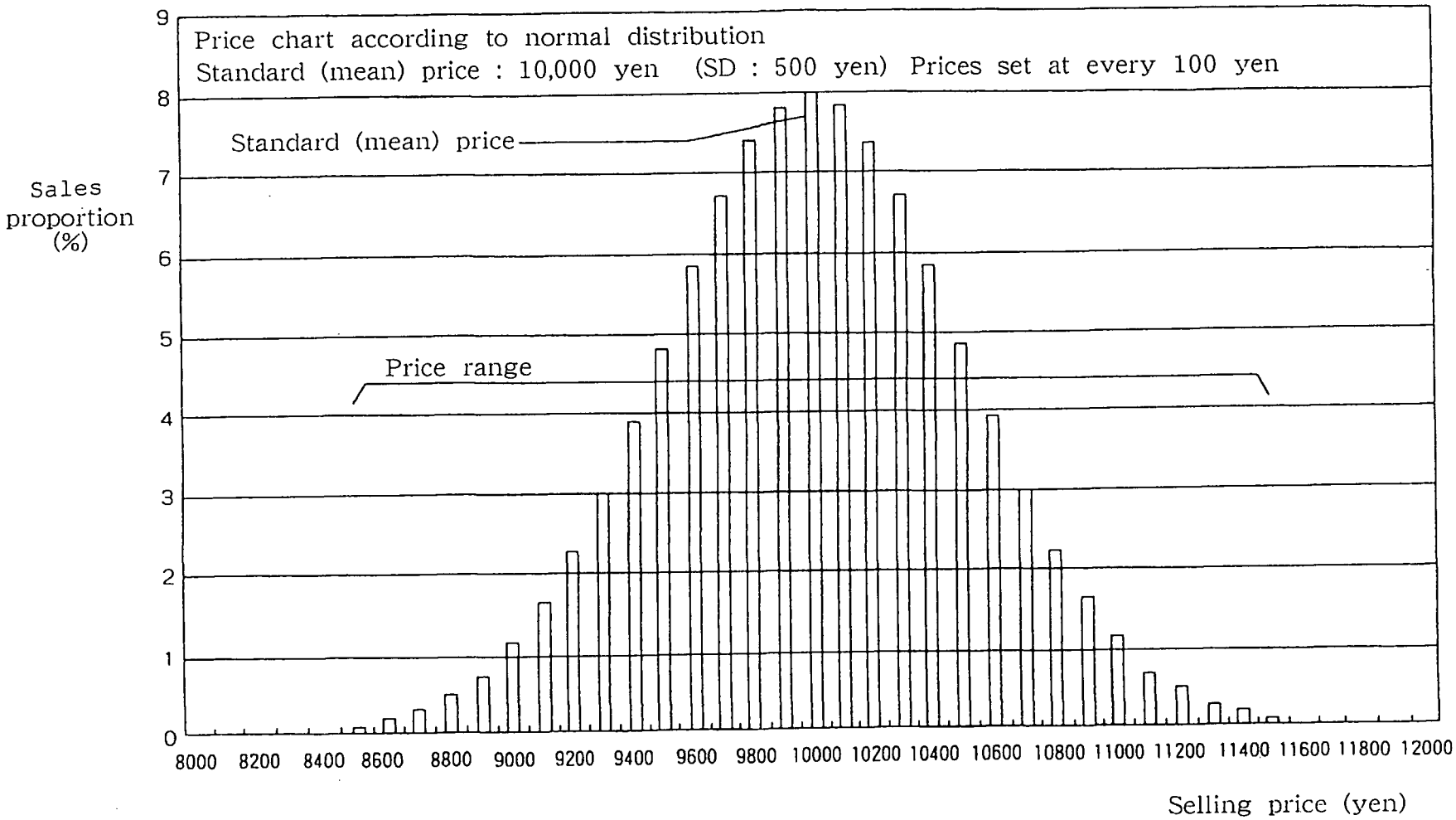
FIG.3